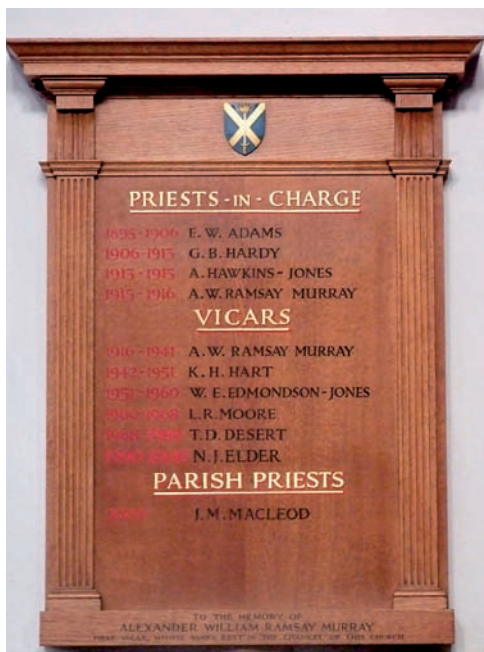


Chapter 2

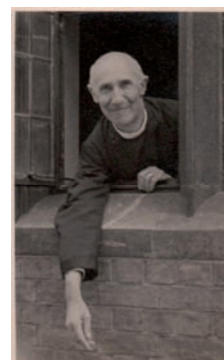
Vicars Past and Present



Originally the services at All Saints' were run by staff from St Paul's Church, notably Rev'd Adams. He moved into Queen's Park on his marriage and lived at 51 Hurst Grove.

In November 1916, All Saints' became an independent parish. Strong links remained with St Paul's. For example they shared a common magazine.

On 14th December 1916, Rev'd Alec Ramsay Murray was licensed by the Bishop of St Albans as Perpetual Curate with the courtesy title of Titular Vicar. On 21st December 1916, Dr Fasnacht and Mr Gyde were elected as the first All Saints' churchwardens.



Rev'd Ramsay Murray served as vicar for twenty five years from 1916 until 1941. His daughter Kate remembers:

The vicarage was at 33 Cutcliffe Grove and there was about half an acre of rough ground between the gardens of Hurst Grove and the vicarage flower garden. Buttercup was a rescue goat imported to graze the long grass. Occasionally, my father would take her to eat the grassy bit in front of the church.



Rev'd Ramsay Murray and his goat Buttercup



Rev'd Kendrick Hart took over from Ramsay Murray in 1942 and was vicar until 1951. Peggy and Len Watts were married by him in 1945. They remember:

We went on holiday to Plymth in Cornwall some years after Rev'd Hart had retired. Imagine our surprise when we discovered he was conducting the service. He had come down from London to take over as relief vicar. He was equally surprised to see us!

He kept the choir boys under control during the services. The choir master could only see the south side of the stalls. One Sunday as we were singing the Magnificat or Creed, I was tugging the surplice of the chorister in front of me. I felt a painful smack on the back of my head as the vicar walked from his seat to the altar. At the time he was carrying either a Bible or hymn book!

Bill Jennison

Rev'd Edmondson-Jones was vicar from 1951 to 1960.

He was a great sportsman and supported all the local teams. He often visited our house to chat with dad about sport and with mum about us. It was he who suggested that I would be a priest one day and gave them the name of a college. He was a great man of the people.

Peter Taylor



I remember the vicar promised everyone a peal of bells for Christmas. Well, we got them – a record player, a record and a loudspeaker above the (original) old door entrance to the vestry!

Bill Jennison

Rev'd Leonard Moore was vicar from 1960 to 1968. It was during his time here that the west end improvements were finally completed.

We were delighted when the west end was finished. Earlier this year, I was looking at family wedding photos and noticed how good the west end door looked in recent photos compared with the west end door in my wedding photo (see Chapter 5).

Eileen Impey



Dedication of West End, 20 November 1963.

The dedication of the west end improvements 1963. Father Moore is in the centre.



Following Rev'd Moore came Rev'd Denis Desert. He was previously curate at St Mary's Goldington. He was vicar from 1968 until 1989. During his time of ministry, developments took place nationally in extending the role of women in the ministry. He was assisted during his ministry by Jane Bass, Capt. Grantley and Gladys Finlayson and Colin and Christine Milne. Jane and Christine were later ordained. Grantley told him a story of how when visiting wearing his Church Army uniform, he was told 'The gas meter is under the stairs!'

It must have been early in 1968 when a letter arrived from the Bishop inviting me to consider the parish of All Saints' Bedford. I was delighted because my old friend Kendrick Hart who had impressed me when he was a bright young vicar of Rickmansworth had served at All Saints' during the war. So I was instituted by Michael Gresford – Jones, the Lord Bishop of St Albans on March 26th. I was to serve twenty one happy years in the parish.

I immediately felt at home at the first Eucharist the following Sunday. I was particularly impressed by the considerable number of members from the Caribbean packed into the north aisle. However, I soon put that right by gradually moving out the chairs until everyone sat in the centre of the nave!

In the seventies a young girl asked me 'Why did God create dinosaurs?' I have no idea of my reply but she told me of her interest in singing and I suggested she joined the choir. When she left school, she went to a college of music in London and was taken on by the Francisco Opera Company. She is now, as Alison Buchanan well known and very much in demand. She was married at All Saints' and Sir Colin Davis, the well known conductor was a guest at her wedding.

Rev'd Denis Desert



Nicholas Elder was vicar from 1990 to 2000. He reintroduced the Christingle service to All Saints'.

The funniest service ever was the Christingle when Father Nicholas persuaded Maggie McLean, the curate to dress as the TV character Mr Blobby, from Noel Edmonds' show. The children's faces were a picture as they believed the real Mr Blobby had come to visit. Everyone was in fits of laughter.

Diane Watts

Rev'd Elder (on the right) at his new church St George's Camberwell in the vestments bought with money given by All Saints' as a leaving gift.



Father Nicholas came to my Silver Wedding party in 1984. This year we celebrated our Golden Wedding. Jack Burgess, churchwarden is on the right. Mavis and Keith Green



Rev'd Jay MacLeod came to All Saints' in 2003 following a three year interregnum.

My wife Sally Asher has roots in Bedford, and on a visit to her family about 20 years ago I discovered Mary Shaw's wonderful bookshop. Mary had a keen memory, and when John Asher went into Harmony Books to buy Christmas cards in 2002, she explained that her church was still without a vicar and didn't he have an Anglican priest for a son-in-law? My family and I were very happy in a Lancashire mill town, but I agreed to meet the Archdeacon of Bedford at the Swan Inn for an 'exploratory chat'. He took me to Queen's Park where Churchwardens Diane Watts and Tony Albone happened to be waiting. An hour later I was besotted with both the church and the neighbourhood. I still am!

Rev'd Jay MacLeod



Canon John Tibbs and Rev'd Peter Taylor are invaluable in assisting Father Jay run the services.



For National Marriage Week in February 2008, some couples including myself and my wife renewed our marriage vows during the morning service. The weather was atrocious with a lot of snow and ice so Father Peter couldn't make it from St Neots to lead this service. I had to step in at short notice. Great hilarity ensued with guffaws of laughter from the choir when all the men repeated after me 'I take thee Margaret-Anne' instead of saying their own wife's names!

Canon John Tibbs